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STEPS TOWARD A SOLUTION OF THE INDOCHINA IMBROGLIO.(U)

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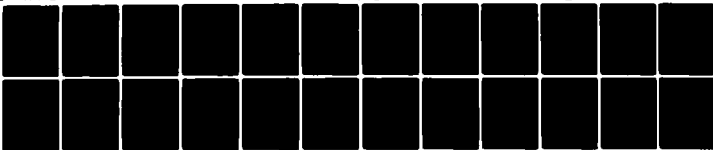
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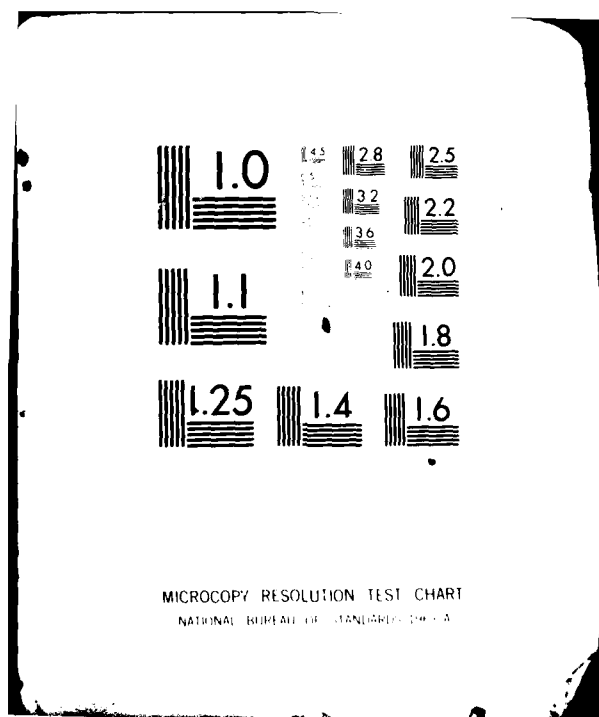
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Guy J. Pauker

August 1981

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STEPS TOWARD A SOLUTION OF THE INDOCHINA IMBROGLIO

Guy J. Pauker
The Rand Corporation



Paper prepared for the Fourth Soviet-American Conference on Asia, Tashkent, USSR, September 1981. Views expressed in this paper are the author's own, and are not necessarily shared by Rand or its research sponsors.

The Thirty Years' War, a general conflict between Catholic Europe and Protestant Europe, came to an end on October 24, 1648, when the Treaties of Westphalia were signed after five years of negotiations. The complex arrangements, guaranteed by France and Sweden, respectively a Catholic and a Protestant power, provided, *inter alia*, that within the Diet of the Holy Roman Empire matters relating to religion should not be decided by a majority but by conference and agreement between the Catholic and Protestant states, as organized corporations.¹ Exhausted by war, the leaders of Europe had become less interested in dogma than in practical solutions providing peace. The religious wars were brought to an end.

The peoples of Southeast Asia need a "Treaty of Westphalia." They have known little peace since the beginning of World War II. The 260 million people of the five countries of the ASEAN group (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand) and the 32 million people of Burma have been denied peaceful economic growth due to a wide variety of armed insurgencies rooted in ethnic, religious, and ideological conflicts, frequently aided and abetted from abroad. Although the ASEAN group of countries nevertheless achieved remarkable rates of economic growth, especially in the last decade, they would have been able to make greater strides toward overcoming the abject poverty of their people if a substantial proportion of their scarce material resources and human skills had not been diverted to military purposes.

Particularly tragic has been the fate of the peoples of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, who now number about 60 million. Since the occupation of Indochina by Japanese forces in September 1940, there has been no peace in those three countries. For a considerably longer period than during the religious wars that plagued Europe in the 17th century, the population of Indochina has been the victim of every conceivable form of political violence, in the name of causes which will appear as irrelevant to future generations as those which sustained the fighting in Europe between 1618 and 1648.

International power politics, historical enmities, ideological conflicts, ethnic clashes, and sheer human stupidity and vanity have produced the particularly poisonous environment in which the peoples of Indochina have been obliged to live for more than four decades. At present there still seems to be no end in sight, as this abominable situation continues. But history teaches us that even the most intractable conflicts terminate eventually, usually with the adoption of solutions that seemed previously totally unacceptable. Ways must be found to restore peace for the peoples of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. That process will obviously require not only changes in the attitudes of the external powers and superpowers which interfere in the affairs of Indochina, but also a different world view on the part of the Vietnamese leaders, who have been unable to avoid the hubris that often follows success.

Regardless of ideological preferences, students of Southeast Asian affairs could not help but admire the dedication and skill with which the leaders of the Vietnamese Communist Party managed the struggle which culminated on July 2, 1976 in the establishment of the unified Socialist Republic of Vietnam, more than thirty years after Ho Chi Minh had read the Declaration of Independence of Vietnam to a crowd assembled in Hanoi on September 2, 1945. Having prevailed over their domestic, French, and American adversaries, Ho Chi Minh's comrades had ample reasons to believe in their "manifest destiny." But the events of the last five years raise serious questions about the wisdom of the decisions made in Hanoi after the successful completion of Vietnam's war of national liberation.

Although the public record is not complete, it appears that the Carter Administration was seriously interested in normalization of relations with the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in its first two years. Negotiations were conducted in 1977 and 1978 on the American side by Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke, a trusted aide of President Carter, with a known record of opposition to the Vietnam war. Furthermore, past history indicated that after a war the American people could be benevolent and generous toward former adversaries. But Hanoi's terms for normalization were apparently so rigid that even

favorably inclined American negotiators could not find a formula acceptable to the Congress and people of the United States. Vietnam had been the first military failure in American history and emotions were still strong, especially among the veterans of that war and their families. Hanoi's offer to discuss normalization of relations with Washington "without preconditions," made public in Tokyo on July 10, 1978 by Deputy Foreign Minister Phan Hien, came too late. Vietnam had missed an opportunity that might have changed the course of its history.

The Hanoi leadership also mishandled Vietnam's relations with the ASEAN group of nations. All five ASEAN nations are governed by leaders who had been threatened through subversion or armed insurrection by domestic Communist adversaries. Nevertheless the leaders of ASEAN consider it highly desirable to create in Southeast Asia a "zone of peace, freedom and neutrality" that would facilitate neighborly relations and eventually various forms of cooperation with the victorious three Communist regimes in Indochina. They are also anxious to reduce as much as possible the interference of external powers in the affairs of Southeast Asia.

Shortly after the proclamation of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Deputy Foreign Minister Phan Hien visited ASEAN capitals stating publicly that his country intended to export rice, timber, and coal, not revolution, and that the American weapons captured in 1975 would be no threat to Vietnam's ASEAN neighbors. Apparently these assurances lacked conviction; Vietnam's military strength was causing considerable concern in ASEAN circles as its manpower, weapons, and experience exceeded by a substantial margin the combined resources of all five ASEAN states. Although there was unease and uncertainty about the ultimate intentions of Ho Chi Minh's comrades in Southeast Asia, ASEAN leaders were hoping that Vietnam needed a period of reconstruction and development, with foreign assistance. But Vietnam did not demobilize. Reflecting views held in ASEAN capitals, I wrote in 1976:

[The ASEAN governments assume that] the Hanoi government could become as ruthless in seeking hegemony in Southeast Asia as it was in the past 30 years when it imposed gigantic

sacrifices on its own people in its struggle against the West. It is not a farfetched assumption that if the leaders of the Lao Dong party have or develop such regional ambitions, Vietnam could become a twentieth-century Prussia in Southeast Asia.²

By deciding to intervene unilaterally in Cambodia, the Vietnamese government activated the worst fears of its ASEAN neighbors and made it impossible for most members of the United Nations to condone actions which were basically in accordance with widely held views that the Pol Pot regime in Phnom Penh was a disgrace to human civilization. It was a well-known fact that the helpless population of Cambodia had become, since April 1975, prey to a group of homicidal maniacs, the Khmer Rouge, who held that all urban and educated Cambodians had to be liquidated and that the traditional culture of the rural population had to be smashed. The scale of the massacres perpetrated in pursuit of that sick doctrine may never be established, but there is no doubt that widespread genocide occurred in Cambodia from 1975 through 1978. It is therefore conceivable that a less deceitful and arrogant Vietnamese diplomacy could have resulted in collective action by the nations of Southeast Asia, on humanitarian grounds. Instead, the crimes of the Pol Pot regime were used by Hanoi as a pretext for the installation of a Vietnamese puppet regime in Phnom Penh.

Even if Vietnam had been provoked by Khmer Rouge incursions on its territory, Hanoi should have made use of available international procedures to establish the culpability of the Khmer Rouge aggressors before undertaking military action. Even if the Khmer Rouge had staged incursions along the Cambodian-Vietnamese border and murdered Vietnamese inhabitants on both sides of that frontier, Hanoi could not claim that the Khmer Rouge constituted a serious threat to the Vietnamese nation, which had by far the greatest military capability in Southeast Asia and had repeatedly shown its mettle.

Seen from ASEAN capitals, the chain of events that started in the fall of 1978 strengthened their apprehensions. It also damaged further the already suspect credibility of the Hanoi government. When Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong made a hastily arranged visit to Thailand, the

Philippines, and Indonesia, in September 1978, prompted probably by announced plans for a visit to the ASEAN region by Chinese Vice-Premier Deng Xiaoping, he was received with flawless courtesy, but failed to gain endorsement for a proposal to create in Southeast Asia an area of "peace, independence, and neutrality." Despite Vietnam's pledge "to refrain from carrying out subversive activities, directly or indirectly, against each other," a statement which appears in the joint communiqués issued in Bangkok, Manila, and Jakarta, the three ASEAN governments declined to sign the friendship and cooperation treaties which Pham Van Dong had proposed. Visits by the Vietnamese Premier to Malaysia and Singapore in October followed the same general pattern. ASEAN was obviously reluctant to enter formal diplomatic arrangements with Vietnam.

Then, on November 3, 1978, Premier Pham Van Dong and Communist Party General Secretary Le Duan signed in Moscow a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, which contained mutual security provisions against attacks or threats of attack from third parties. On December 3, former Khmer Rouge officer Heng Samrin suddenly proclaimed the establishment of a Kampuchean United Front for National Salvation, complete with army, flag, and radio station. On December 25, 100,000 Vietnamese troops started a major offensive along five invasion routes into Cambodia, supported by air strikes, heavy artillery, and tanks. Within two weeks Pol Pot's forces had been driven out of Phnom Penh and Heng Samrin established a new government in the capital that had been savagely destroyed by the Khmer Rouge when they took over in 1975. On February 20, 1979, Vietnam signed a Treaty of Peace and Friendship with the new regime in Cambodia. Similar to the accord concluded by Vietnam with Laos in 1977, it gave Hanoi the right to station troops in Cambodia to "preserve the territorial integrity" of that country and thus consolidated Vietnam's hegemony over all of Indochina through satellite governments in Vientiane and Phnom Penh. Ever since, about 200,000 Vietnamese troops have been stationed in Cambodia. For statesmen and diplomats familiar with the troubled history of the last fifty years, that pattern of events had characteristics both familiar and frightening, being typical of the way

superior military power has been used to justify the conquest, occupation, and annexation of weaker nations.

Even those who were not unhappy that the despicable Khmer Rouge had been chased out of Phnom Penh could not reconcile Hanoi's actions with the rules of international conduct which provide some protection for the weak against the strong in the international community of nations.

The ASEAN governments had been worried since the spring of 1975 about the emergence of Vietnam as an ideologically hostile, politically militant, and militarily superior regional power. Its alliance with the Soviet Union was disturbing to governments hoping to transform Southeast Asia into a "zone of peace, freedom, and neutrality" because it intensified the Soviet-American geopolitical competition in the region and exacerbated the local manifestations of the Sino-Soviet conflict. But these apprehensions were less disturbing than the tangible evidence that Vietnam was prepared to use the full might of its military resources against a considerably smaller and weaker neighbor. ASEAN's firm diplomatic stance against all attempts to legitimize the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia through international recognition of the Heng Samrin regime does not reflect any sympathy for Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge, but merely the fear that Vietnam's superior military capability, sustained by an increasing flow of Soviet economic and military assistance, might be used in the future to establish satellite regimes in Thailand and other Southeast Asian countries.

As the United States has been viewed since the proclamation of the Nixon Doctrine in 1969 as uninterested in playing a decisive role in the military balance of Southeast Asia, Thailand was prompted by Vietnam's actions to seek Chinese protection against the threat of 200,000 Vietnamese troops on its eastern frontier. For Thailand's security managers the joke was not funny that traffic jams were the only obstacle to the rapid occupation of Bangkok by Vietnamese motorized units. Like other Southeast Asian nations, Thailand is not complacent about the long-term implications of the proximity of a billion Chinese. But under the crisis circumstances created by the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia, the Chinese 17-day incursion into Vietnam which

started on February 17, 1979 with the professed purpose of teaching Hanoi a lesson, was viewed by Bangkok as the strongest available deterrent against another Vietnamese *Blitzkrieg*.

The perceived need for Chinese protection and the desire to weaken Vietnam's dynamism prompted Thailand to facilitate covertly the logistic support given to the Khmer Rouge by Beijing. Thus, the Cambodian civil war became an arena for the Sino-Soviet global conflict and the Sino-Vietnamese regional conflict, to the great detriment of the peoples of Indochina. Neither ASEAN nor the United States are at ease with the macabre situation of having to support the claim of the Khmer Rouge to the seat of Cambodia in the United Nations in order to deny legitimacy to the government installed in Phnom Penh by Vietnamese military action. All protagonists in this sordid affair seem to be captives of a maze of circumstances from which only a bold diplomatic stroke will be able to extricate them.

According to observers working for international relief organizations active in Cambodia, the life of the population has improved in the last two years. From a humanitarian point of view the Heng Samrin regime is clearly preferable to that of Pol Pot, although there is strong resentment against the Vietnamese presence. With the possible exception of China, whose concern seems to be exclusively strategic and geopolitical, no other government wishes to assist the return of the Khmer Rouge to Phnom Penh. Despite some vague Western and ASEAN hopes that a return to power of Prince Sihanouk and/or former Prime Minister Son Sann could be arranged, as a neutralist, *ancien régime* alternative to the Khmer Rouge, the military weakness of their respective supporters denies them a significant role in the present phase of the Cambodian imbroglio.

An eventual settlement will have to provide satisfactory solutions to very difficult issues at three different levels: domestic Cambodian politics, regional relations between the three countries of Indochina and the five countries of ASEAN, and the strategic triangle consisting of the United States, the Soviet Union, and China. The complex web of interests and emotions within and between these three levels requires systematic analysis but only some salient aspects will be touched upon below.

In recent conversations with ASEAN colleagues, Vietnamese diplomats have claimed that the Heng Samrin government is well established and does not need protection by Vietnamese forces. Echoing published statements by Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach, those diplomats argue that the Vietnamese forces will be withdrawn "when the threat from China is removed."³ If by "Chinese threat" the Vietnamese leaders mean the support of the Khmer Rouge forces by China, then an arrangement is conceivable under which the Vietnamese forces would leave Cambodia while China would cease to supply Pol Pot's guerillas. But in Nguyen Co Thach's article appears again the often-repeated Vietnamese statement that "China has been engaged in policies of expansion and aggression against Vietnam for 4000 years."⁴ The geographic proximity of China and Vietnam is an unalterable fact of life, as is the fact that the population of China is twenty times larger than Vietnam's. If the Vietnamese leaders invoke that threat to justify the occupation of Cambodia, they are obviously using a transparent pretext to justify their regional hegemony and are in fact aggravating the Chinese threat. Furthermore, the deployment of Vietnamese forces in partly hostile Cambodian territory cannot strengthen Vietnam's defenses against China.

ASEAN diplomats have told their Vietnamese colleagues in private conversations that they share their concern about China, but believe that their best protection is rapid economic development. Therefore, they argue, Vietnam should withdraw its troops from Cambodia both to save the cost of their deployment abroad and to make it possible for Vietnam to receive foreign aid from Western Europe, Japan, and eventually even the United States. But Vietnamese diplomats apparently are not responsive to that argument and merely hark back to the Chinese threat.

As long as Vietnamese forces remain in Cambodia and China supplies Pol Pot's guerillas, the military stalemate is not likely to be broken. The Khmer Rouge will not (and should not) regain control of the country, but the Vietnamese occupation forces will be bogged down in a quagmire similar to that which bedeviled American troops in Vietnam. The Chinese position is that eventually the Vietnamese forces will have to be withdrawn by an exhausted Hanoi government. The material

costs to China of support to the Pol Pot forces are obviously small enough to make a protracted conflict acceptable to Beijing. The ASEAN position is different. They would prefer a political solution of the Cambodian issue so that a developing Vietnam could then become a contributor to regional stability. But as long as Hanoi maintains its present position, China and ASEAN will pursue parallel policies and the United States will have no choice but to give political support to its Asian friends, allies, and partners.

Eventually, a solution will have to be worked out at the intermediate, regional level between ASEAN and the countries of Indochina. It is not realistic to expect that the antagonists in the Cambodian civil war will be able to achieve national reconciliation. It is also doubtful that the issues confronting the United States, the Soviet Union, and China will be resolved early enough to benefit the long-suffering peoples of Indochina. China will not abandon its efforts to exercise influence in Southeast Asia, as long as the Soviet Union maintains and expands its presence in the region. Having won a war by proxy in Indochina, the Soviet Union will not renounce the spoils of victory, at least as long as its global geopolitical competition with the United States remains a driving force of its foreign policy.

But it is conceivable that the leaders of the 350 million people of Southeast Asia will work out mutually beneficial arrangements in the not-too-distant future. Regardless of their socioeconomic ideology, all governments in the region are strongly nationalistic. For none of them is dependence on an external power the preferred option. The countries of Southeast Asia would be less dependent on external aid if a smaller amount of their resources were used for military purposes. An agreement within the region would also increase the chances that the major external powers would agree, tacitly or explicitly, on a code of conduct reducing external interference in the region. The major powers are not likely to exert self-restraint unilaterally, but they might respond to coordinated initiatives from within the region.

Peace is desperately needed by the countries of Indochina. Despite brave statements issued by Hanoi on the fifth anniversary of the

establishment of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, on July 2, 1981, objective foreign observers agree, and the Vietnamese press confirms, that the economic situation in that country is not good. In its anniversary editorial *Nhan Dan* wrote: "The socialist revolution in this country is facing numerous difficulties, but experience shows that they will be overcome."⁵ The March 1981 issue of *Tap Chi Cong San* (*Communist Review*) stated, discussing the crucial issue of food production:

In 1965, our country had a population of 35 million and produced 10.56 million tons of grain, in paddy equivalent, an average of 300 kilograms per capita. . . . In 1979, the country had a population of 52.5 million and produced 13.94 million tons of grain, an average of 265 kilograms per capita. . . . The average amount of grain per capita in 1980 was 265 kilograms, about the same as in 1979 and 10 kilograms less than in 1976.

Grain production has increased slowly due to many reasons. The amount of farmland under the cultivation of grain has virtually not increased at all, the amount of cropland has increased slowly, crop yields have virtually remained the same and, at many places, have recently shown a tendency to be declining.⁶

Numerous other articles in Vietnamese newspapers and journals indicate the great difficulties Vietnam faces at the beginning of its third five-year plan (1981-1985). Labor is not used effectively, arable land is not properly developed, "the state capacity to provide materials is very limited,"⁷ etc. All this is not surprising, in view of the fact that Vietnam has lived under war conditions for four decades. Hoang Van Hoan, former vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the Vietnamese National Assembly, who defected to China in July 1979, is obviously not an objective observer. But his revealing recent comments are verified by independent Vietnamese sources.

According to Hoang Van Hoan, the 1976-1980 five-year plan was a flop. Vietnam is about 2 million tons short of food grains every year. The output of industry has dropped sharply, due to lack of raw materials, energy, technical know-how, and labor. Shop shelves are empty and available commodities find their way into the hands of speculators. People in Vietnam are anxious, discouraged, and resentful, which

generates factional strife, corruption, degeneration, bribery, bullying, and social ills. In his April 1981 interview with *Beijing Review*, Hoang Van Hoan concluded:

We should have concentrated on healing the wounds of war and the reconstruction of the nation right after countrywide liberation. Instead, Le Duan and his cohorts proclaimed Vietnam the third strongest military power in the world and sent vast numbers of soldiers to take over Laos, overrun Kampuchea, and to harass and provoke China. The whole nation was mobilized, with manpower and material resources all geared for war. It was quite unnecessary. The result was to leave production work mainly to the old, the weak, the women and children.⁸

Hoang Van Hoan seems to know what he is talking about. In January 1981 a columnist wrote in *Hanoi Moi*:

As one visited a number of general merchandise stores in these first days of the new plan, one could not help being surprised to see their counters being completely empty. While it was cold and rainy, the tailoring counter did not have socks, heavy coats, quilted blankets, waterproof materials, etc. Some counters displayed as decoration many paper fans instead!

Many items of daily usage like watches, chopsticks, glasses, nails, chalk, pens, etc., were also absent.⁹

As further corroboration, the journal *Luat Hoc* (Jurisprudence) stated in its July-September 1980 issue that the number of cases of corruption tried in courts had increased from 558 in 1974, involving 1352 defendants, to 982 in 1979, involving 2281 defendants, and commented: "In our country today, corruption is a very common and serious phenomenon."¹⁰

According to visitors to Vietnam, people do not appear destitute, but there are many shortages and morale is low, because there seems no end in sight to the hardships caused by war. The black market is flourishing. On the Thai border Vietnamese deserters comment that if Ho Chi Minh were alive Vietnam would not be entangled in Cambodia. Among the constant exodus of "boat people" the number of Vietnamese draft dodgers is increasing. South Vietnam is still not fully

integrated into the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and in Hoa Hao, Cao Dai, and Fulro armed insurgents remain active. If and when the Hanoi leadership reaches the conclusion that their priorities are wrong, ASEAN should be willing and able to help produce a settlement.

There will be no peace in Southeast Asia unless Cambodia is neutralized. A realistic solution should not enhance the position of China in the region and would have to satisfy the security requirements of both Thailand and Vietnam. That can only be achieved if the 200,000 Vietnamese troops are withdrawn from Cambodia, without making it possible for the 30,000 Khmer Rouge guerillas to regain control of the country. The Soviet Union and Vietnam will obviously not accept a solution that would substitute Beijing's influence in Phnom Penh for Hanoi's. But if Vietnam is only seeking to protect the security of its western borders and not hegemony in Indochina, it is conceivable that, with ASEAN's help, the Vietnamese troops could be withdrawn from Cambodia while the Khmer Rouge would be denied sanctuaries and Chinese logistic support, both of which require Thai acquiescence.

Vietnam claims that any regime other than Heng Samrin's would make Cambodia a Chinese satellite. That is not necessarily so, if a neutral regime in Phnom Penh could count on wide and substantial external support. At present there seems to be little hope for such a solution, in view of Hanoi's intransigent position. The occupation of Cambodia seems to be more important to the Vietnamese leaders than economic development, cooperation with ASEAN, and normalization of relations with the industrial democracies. But perhaps the 5th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam, scheduled for the end of 1981, will address this issue in a more realistic spirit and adopt a different set of priorities.

The Soviet Union could obviously play a constructive role in the process of relaxation of tensions and confidence-building in Southeast Asia. French publications claim that in exchange for doubling economic aid to Vietnam from the equivalent of \$3 million to the equivalent of \$6 million a day, the Soviet Union has obtained unrestricted use of the former American bases in South Vietnam, at Tan Son Nhut, Bien Hoa, Cam Ranh, and Da Nang. Radio Manila recently expressed alarm over the completion of the new Soviet base at Cam Ranh Bay.¹¹

Regardless of the accuracy of these statements, the Soviet Union is clearly at present the only external power that has influence in Hanoi. Soviet-Vietnamese relations need not be affected by a Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia. On the contrary, it could result in the more productive utilization by Vietnam of Soviet aid for economic development and also reduce the incipient political rivalry between Hanoi and Moscow for influence in Phnom Penh. If the Soviet Union and its allies would join the United States, Japan, the European Economic Community, Australia, ASEAN, and others in protecting and supporting the neutrality of Cambodia, it should be possible to establish in Phnom Penh a regime that would not become an instrument of China.

The International Conference on Kampuchea, held in New York on July 13-17, 1981, under United Nations auspices, was a step in the right direction, even though it was boycotted by the Soviet Union and its allies. After four days of public rhetoric and private bargaining, the participating countries, representing an absolute majority of the total membership of the United Nations, established an *Ad Hoc* Committee consisting of Japan, Malaysia, Nigeria, Senegal, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, and Thailand, which will "assist the Conference in seeking a comprehensive political settlement of the Kampuchean question." The possible outlines of a solution are embodied in the Declaration and the Resolution unanimously adopted on July 17, 1981 (Annexes I and II to this paper).¹²

A reading of these two brief documents makes it clear that the works of the Conference can hardly be described as "illegal and immoral," as was stated with regrettable arrogance by Ha Van Lau, the Vietnamese Ambassador to the United Nations.¹³ On the other hand, the Conference amounted probably to less than what was claimed by the ebullient Foreign Minister of the Philippines, Carlos P. Romulo:

We urge Vietnam to listen to the collective will of this Conference. Ninety-one nations are present here, representing the wishes of more than three and a half billion people, or approximately 80 percent of the total population of the planet. This means that of every ten persons you meet, fully eight strongly disapprove of the invasion and occupation

of Kampuchea. Vietnam can hardly fail to overlook this fact.¹⁴

Held thirty months after the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia, the conference cannot be viewed as a massive, spontaneous outburst of moral indignation. But it does reflect accurately the reluctance of the West and of most of the Third World to condone foreign military intervention in the affairs of a sovereign state. Although they are considered moral pariahs, the Khmer Rouge were allowed to address the conference (while Secretary of State Alexander Haig and his aides walked out), whereas the less anathematized Heng Samrin region was not invited. The International Conference on Kampuchea was not managed by the United States but by ASEAN. The Foreign Minister of Singapore, Suppiah Dhanabalan, summed up the position of his group of countries when he remarked tersely on opening day: "It is not our intention to bring Vietnam to its knees. We only want to bring it to its senses."¹⁵

Whereas China was openly committed to the support of the Khmer Rouge, attempting to set the stage for a return of that abominable group to Phnom Penh and for protracted bleeding of Vietnam, ASEAN was conciliatory toward the Hanoi government, as is clearly reflected in the text of the July 17 Declaration. China opposed successfully explicit provisions for the disarming of Pol Pot's guerilla force and for the establishment of an interim government that would weaken the Khmer Rouge's claim for restoration of their regime, but ASEAN managed to salvage the possibility of talks with Vietnam and the promise of economic cooperation "following the peaceful resolution of the Kampuchean conflict."

The *Ad Hoc* Committee will take steps to contact the Soviet Union and Vietnam in the next few months, according to statements made by the Foreign Minister of Singapore to reporters, on July 20. The authoritative *Bangkok Post* commented the same day:

What happens next is up to Moscow and Hanoi. Representatives of the 91 nations who took part in the conference will continue their efforts to get the Vietnamese to the conference table and to achieve Kampuchean independence, but all acknowledge that this will take time. The Vietnamese have backed themselves

into a corner and are unlikely to abandon their stance that their troops have been invited to assist the government they, themselves, installed. Time, patience, and tolerance are going to be the key elements in implementing the solution agreed upon in New York.¹⁶

As an alternative to the venue created by the July 13-17 conference, another channel for negotiations has been proposed by the foreign ministers of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the People's Republic of Kampuchea. In a letter addressed collectively to United Nations Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim on May 19, 1981, the three foreign ministers of Indochina made the following proposal:

The questions concerning Southeast Asia must be discussed and settled by countries in the region in the spirit of equality, mutual agreement, nonimposition by one group on the other, and noninterference from outside. Proceeding from this principle and with the desire to resolve the differences between the two groups of countries--the Indochinese and the ASEAN countries--in the interests of peace, stability, and cooperation of Southeast Asia, the conference of the Indochinese foreign ministers held on January 27 and 28, 1981, in Ho Chi Minh City, proposed that a regional conference be held between these two groups to discuss and settle questions raised by each group, and that on the basis of the agreements reached, an international conference be convened to recognize and guarantee such agreements.¹⁷

The ASEAN governments did not accept that proposal, which would have involved *de facto* recognition of the Heng Samrin regime. Instead, a number of consultations have been held by foreign ministers from the two groups of countries, visiting each other's capitals. Although no breakthroughs have been achieved, the message must have reached Hanoi by now that ASEAN wishes to see Vietnam develop into a politically independent and economically prosperous nation, joining in the creation of a zone of peace, freedom, and neutrality and that the major obstacle that has to be removed is the military occupation of Cambodia in violation of international law. This has been the implicit message of the ASEAN foreign ministers' meeting held in Manila on June 18 and 19, 1981.¹⁸

At this time, it seems more likely that the resolution of the Cambodian issue will be achieved eventually through consultations and then negotiations between ASEAN and the countries of Indochina, rather than through the reconciliation of the bitterly hostile Cambodian political factions, or as the result of a "global bargain" between the major powers involved in the affairs of Southeast Asia. But there is one intriguing alternative that I wish to submit for discussion with our Soviet colleagues, namely a joint effort by the United States and the Soviet Union to settle the problems of Indochina as part of a bold experiment concerning the future relations of the United States and the Soviet Union with the Third World. Before 1975 Washington held the costly but misguided view that it had vital interests in Indochina. It learned after the failure of its military and political efforts in those three countries that their importance had been exaggerated. At present Moscow may overestimate the geopolitical and strategic importance of its position in Indochina. Soviet and American support for the creation of a genuine "zone of peace, freedom and neutrality" may benefit in the long run the global relations between the super-powers, the welfare and progress of 350 million people in Southeast Asia who need peace desperately, and the creation of a regional order protected against a variety of present and future hegemonic aspirations.

As the first Soviet spokesman published in many years by the American quarterly *Foreign Affairs*, Henry Trofimenko has asked recently some very relevant questions, to which I wish to respond in a constructive spirit. He wrote:

Can any 'code of conduct' of the Soviet Union and the United States in the Third World lessen their confrontation on an international scale? If this means establishing spheres of influence or spheres of special interests, then such a 'code' is unacceptable to the Soviet Union. On the other hand, if such a code means basing relations with the developing countries on generally recognized norms of international law, then the Soviet Union is quite ready and willing to abide by it. These norms necessarily include the recognition of the right of every people to govern their own affairs, the obligation to respect the sovereignty of each state over its natural resources, and the readiness to honor the status of non-alignment which these countries choose.

At the same time, it is obvious that elaboration of certain more specific rules of conduct stands little practical chance of success in view of the objective factors leading to revolutionary changes in the Third World, and in light of the conflicting evaluations given to these phenomena by the capitalist and socialist countries, by the United States and the Soviet Union in this particular case. Their conflicting appraisals give rise to the opposing political stands these countries hold with regard to their support for different social forces and movements in the Third World, and the sociopolitical polarization of that world.¹⁹

The developing countries are indeed going to experience profound revolutionary changes for a long time to come. Having to modernize and industrialize under conditions vastly different from those experienced by the advanced countries, they will probably experiment with a variety of patterns of development different from both those of the free market and of the centrally planned economies. They will also need assistance in the form of foreign capital investments, favorable terms of trade, technology transfer, managerial and entrepreneurial skills from all economically advanced countries, regardless of the socioeconomic systems of donors or recipients. There is no more urgent task than the rapid reduction of the abject poverty of hundreds of millions of human beings in the Third World.

The turbulence associated with the social transformation of economically backward countries lends itself to geopolitical exploitation by the two superpowers and other powers. But the record of the last three decades shows that relations between advanced countries, whatever their social system, and backward countries tend to be volatile. A substantial number of reversals of friendships and alliances has occurred in various parts of the Third World. The process has not benefitted either the superpowers or the developing countries and has occasionally given opportunities to adventurist third parties to fish in muddy waters.

A simple "code of conduct" could become a major confidence-building factor in the relations between the Soviet Union and the United States and would ultimately constitute a substantial contribution to the welfare of the Third World. The "code of conduct" would essentially

consist in the tacit or explicit acceptance of the principle that if, in the course of the revolutionary changes occurring in the Third World, a certain country emancipates itself from the domination or controlling influence of one of the superpowers, the other superpower will abstain from attempting to establish its domination or controlling influence over that country. The dynamic turbulence of the Third World need not be turned into a zero-sum game between the United States and the Soviet Union.

The nonaligned group of countries has gained considerable experience since the 1955 Bandung Conference. The role played by ASEAN at the International Conference on Kampuchea demonstrates that the countries of the Third World are increasingly capable of guiding their own destinies and can resist pressures from the United States, the Soviet Union, China, or other powers. A Third World country should be able to change its relations with one of the superpowers and, through domestic processes, without external interference, also its socio-economic system, without becoming *ipso facto* a target for absorption into the geopolitical and strategic magnetic field of the other superpower.

Knowledgeable and thoughtful students of international affairs will undoubtedly recognize that this simple "code of conduct" would ultimately not benefit one superpower to the detriment of the other. It is also not intended as a device to arrest or retard revolutionary changes in the Third World. Its purpose is to insulate those changes from the geopolitical and strategic competition of the superpowers, which endangers world peace.

The United States and the Soviet Union have interests in other parts of the world that are clearly more vital than those they have in Southeast Asia. Indochina is a good starting place to test the proposed "code of conduct" according to which shifts of Third World countries to nonaligned positions will be encouraged by the superpowers, whereas "reversals of alliances" will be discouraged. The concept may at first sight seem utopian but it is not the product of abstract speculation but of the empirical recognition that everywhere in the Third World the vast majority of the people are longing

for peace and wish to escape the manipulations of various ruthless fanatics who have brought them nothing but misery and suffering.

ANNEX I

Declaration on Kampuchea

1. Pursuant to Articles 1 and 2 of the Charter of the United Nations and to General Assembly resolution 35/6, the United Nations convened the International Conference on Kampuchea at its Headquarters in New York, from 13 to 17 July 1981, with the aim of finding a comprehensive political settlement of the Kampuchean problem.
2. The Conference reaffirms the rights of all States to the inviolability of their sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity and stresses their obligation to respect those rights of their neighbours. The Conference also reaffirms the right of all peoples to determine their own destiny free from foreign interference, subversion and coercion.
3. The Conference expresses its concern that the situation in Kampuchea has resulted from the violation of the principles of respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of States, non-interference in the internal affairs of States and the inadmissibility of the threat or use of force in international relations.
4. The Conference takes note of the serious international consequences that have arisen out of the situation in Kampuchea. In particular, the Conference notes with grave concern the escalation of tension in South-East Asia and major Power involvement as a result of this situation.
5. The Conference also takes note of the serious problem of refugees which has resulted from the situation in Kampuchea and is convinced that a political solution to the conflict will be necessary for the long-term solution of the refugee problem.
6. The Conference stresses its conviction that the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Kampuchea, the restoration and preservation of its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity and the commitment by all States to non-interference and non-intervention in the internal affairs of Kampuchea are the principal components of any just and lasting solution to the Kampuchean problem.
7. The Conference regrets that the foreign armed intervention continues and that the foreign forces have not been withdrawn from Kampuchea, thus making it impossible for the Kampuchean people to express their will in free elections.
8. The Conference is further convinced that a comprehensive political settlement of the Kampuchean conflict is vital to the establishment of a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality in South-East Asia.

9. The Conference emphasizes that Kampuchea, like all other countries, has the right to be independent and sovereign, free from any external threat or armed aggression, free to pursue its own development and a better life for its people in an environment of peace, stability and full respect for human rights.

10. With a view to reaching a comprehensive political settlement in Kampuchea, the Conference calls for negotiations on, inter alia, the following elements:

(a) An agreement on cease-fire by all parties to the conflict in Kampuchea and withdrawal of all foreign forces from Kampuchea in the shortest time possible under the supervision and verification of a United Nations peace-keeping force/observer group;

(b) Appropriate arrangements to ensure that armed Kampuchean factions will not be able to prevent or disrupt the holding of free elections, or intimidate or coerce the population in the electoral process; such arrangements should also ensure that they will respect the result of the free elections;

(c) Appropriate measures for the maintenance of law and order in Kampuchea and the holding of free elections, following the withdrawal of all foreign forces from the country and before the establishment of a new government resulting from those elections;

(d) The holding of free elections under United Nations supervision, which will allow the Kampuchean people to exercise their right to self-determination and elect a government of their own choice; all Kampucheans will have the right to participate in the elections.

11. The Conference appreciates the legitimate security concerns of all States of the region and, therefore, deems it essential for Kampuchea to remain non-aligned and neutral and for the future elected government of Kampuchea to declare that Kampuchea will not pose a threat to or be used against the security, sovereignty and territorial integrity of other States, especially those sharing a common border with Kampuchea.

12. The Conference also deems it essential for the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, all States of South-East Asia as well as other States concerned to declare, in conjunction with paragraph 11 above, that:

(a) They will respect and observe in every way, the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-aligned and neutral status of Kampuchea and recognize its borders as inviolable;

(b) They will refrain from all forms of interference, direct or indirect, in the internal affairs of Kampuchea;

(c) They will not bring Kampuchea into any military alliance or other agreement, whether military or otherwise, which is inconsistent with its declaration under paragraph 11 nor invite or encourage it to enter into any alliance or to conclude any such agreement;

(d) They will refrain from introducing into Kampuchea foreign troops or military personnel and not establish any military bases in Kampuchea;

(e) They will not use the territory of any country, including their own, for interference in the internal affairs of Kampuchea;

(f) They will not pose a threat to the security of Kampuchea or endanger its survival as a sovereign nation.

13. The Conference expresses the hope that, following the peaceful resolution of Kampuchean conflict, an intergovernmental committee will be established to consider a programme of assistance to Kampuchea for the reconstruction of its economy and for the economic and social development of all States of the region.

14. The Conference notes the absence of Viet Nam and other States and urges them to attend the future sessions of the Conference. In this context, the Conference takes note of the current bilateral consultations among the countries of the region and expresses the hope that these consultations will help to persuade all countries of the region and others to participate in the future sessions of the Conference.

15. The Conference expresses the hope that Viet Nam will participate in the negotiating process which can lead to a peaceful solution of the Kampuchean problem and to the restoration of peace and stability to the region of South-East Asia. This will enable all the countries of the region to devote themselves to the task of economic and social development, to engage in confidence-building and to promote regional co-operation in all fields of endeavour, thus heralding a new era of peace, concord and amity in South-East Asia.

ANNEX II

Resolution

The International Conference on Kampuchea,

Recalling its Declaration on Kampuchea of 17 July 1981,

1. Decides to establish an Ad Hoc Committee of the International Conference on Kampuchea, consisting of Japan, Malaysia, Nigeria, Senegal, Sri Lanka, the Sudan and Thailand, and authorizes the President of the Conference, in consultation with the members of the Conference, to include additional members in the Committee;
2. Entrusts the Committee with the following tasks:
 - (a) To assist the Conference in seeking a comprehensive political settlement of the Kampuchean question, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 35/6 of 22 October 1980;
 - (b) To act as an advisory body to the Secretary-General between sessions of the Conference;
 - (c) To undertake missions, where appropriate, in consultation with the Secretary-General and taking into account his recommendations, in pursuit of a comprehensive political settlement to the conflict in Kampuchea;
 - (d) To advise the President of the Conference, after consultations with the Secretary-General, when to reconvene the Conference;
3. Requests the Committee to submit reports to the Conference;
4. Recommends that the General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to consult with, to assist and to provide the Committee with the necessary facilities to carry out its functions;
5. Recommends that the General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to make a preliminary study of the possible future role of the United Nations, taking into account the mandate of the Committee and the elements for negotiations set out in paragraph 10 of the Declaration on Kampuchea;
6. Requests the Secretary-General to transmit the report of the Conference to the General Assembly at its thirty-sixth session;
7. Recommends that the General Assembly should authorize the reconvening of the Conference, at an appropriate time, upon the recommendation of the President of the Conference.

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